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ABSTRACT

The report describes a project aimed at meeting inservice personnel development needs of secondary and postsecondary vocational educators in Michigan. Following an overview which details the development of the project, personnel categories, major events, and a seven-step process model, the report is arranged into 6 parts. The first component of the project deals with the project's technical updating workshops. Needs assessment, locating and cataloging appropriate training sources, and executing successful workshops are presented as critical factors in organizing workshops. Part 2 addresses concerns about teaching competencies. In part 3, an industrial arts component mirrors the first component, also focusing on inservice technical updating. Themes for tailor-made seminars for vocational administrators and inservice events for vocational guidance personnel are discussed in parts 4 and 5. The final section briefly mentions the newest project component, which focuses on individual professional development. The report concludes with a summary of progress made by the project since its implementation. (LH)

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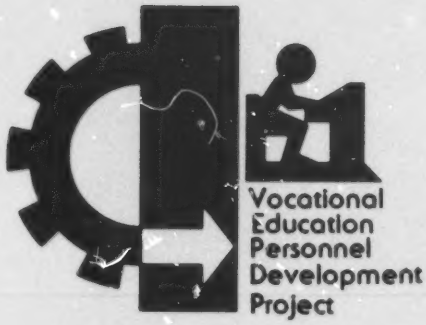

MICHIGAN'S COMPREHENSIVE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

by

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Michigan's Comprehensive Vocational Education Personnel Development Project

How can we keep our area vocational center instructors abreast of technological developments in their occupational specialties? This question was the focus of a committee of the Michigan Association of Area School Administrators (MAASA) in 1978. The committee reasoned that since this problem was held in common by instructors in approximately forty schools, it should be addressed on a state-wide basis. Discussions between the MAASA committee and Michigan State University faculty, and subsequently with the Vocational-Technical Education Service of the Michigan Department of Education, led to the development of a successful collaborative effort which has offered scores of technical updating workshops for inservice vocational-technical instructors, as well as to the establishment of a comprehensive personnel development project serving all secondary and post-secondary Michigan vocational-technical personnel. The Vocational Education Personnel Development Project is a comprehensive state-funded program directed by staff at Michigan State University which offers scores of seminars and workshops each year designed to improve the professional and technical competencies of Michigan inservice vocational-technical education personnel.

Since its original focus on technical updating workshops for secondary area center instructors, the project has expanded to include all secondary and post-secondary vocational-technical instructors and is open to those in correctional institutions, manpower programs and private vocational schools as well. Additional project components, as listed below, have been added from year to year so that most Michigan

vocational-technical personnel categories are now served by the VEPDP.

1. Vocational-technical instructor inservice professional teaching competency needs.

2. Industrial arts teacher inservice technical and professional updating needs.

3. Vocational administrator inservice professional development needs.

Since the first workshops were held in the spring of 1979, approximately 8460 participants have attended over 584 workshops and seminars throughout Michigan and in adjoining states.* These events include:

1. 464 technical updating workshops serving 5347 vocational-technical instructors,

2. 40 teaching competency workshops serving 1281 vocational-technical instructors,

3. 27 administrator seminars serving 637 participants,

4. 2 seminars for vocational guidance and placement personnel serving 65 participants, and

5. 51 industrial arts teacher workshops serving 1130 participants.

A process model was developed in the first year of the project to guide and assure the offering of successful inservice events. The seven step process, as refined over five years, continues to be utilized with all project sponsored events.

1. Identify personnel categories and types of inservice professional development needs to be addressed.

2. Conduct professional development needs assessments and prioritize.

3. Locate and catalog training sources.

4. Match professional development needs with selected training sources.

5. Develop appropriate delivery systems.

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* To December 1, 1983

6. Arrange and conduct specific inservice events.

7. Evaluate results and follow-up.

The VEPDP is assisted by an Advisory Council which is broadly representative of the types of personnel served. This group has provided significant input for keeping project components on target. On occasion, special reference groups representing specific clientele groups are drawn together for assistance in planning key inservice events.

Technical Updating Component

The technical updating component has been and will likely continue to be the largest objective of the project. Accurate needs assessments is a critical factor in delivery of successful technical updating workshops. The VEPDP utilized input (1) from instructors as to their perceived needs and (2) from business and industry sources to pin point recent technological developments.

Since instructors are likely to attend workshops which they perceive to be of importance, they are periodically surveyed state-wide to assess their needs. The resulting tabulated data are then reviewed by a committee of instructors from each occupational specialty to consolidate the needs and establish priorities. These prioritized needs assessments are updated on a two-year cycle.

Input regarding recent technological developments is drawn directly from business and industry sources through telephone interviews. This input from business and industry is combined with prioritized needs from instructor committees to identify key topics for inservice workshops.

Locating and cataloging appropriate training sources is another critical factor in organizing technical updating workshops. Project personnel continually seek additional training sources in business and

industry, public education, and trade and professional associations. The primary focus is on business and industry sources because it is there that most new technological developments take place. The vast majority of business and industry sources have been found to be interested in transmitting their expertise to vocational-technical instructors at little or no cost to the project.

The project has developed a training source directory which includes descriptions of over 300 resources. It is constantly growing and being updated. The directory is organized so that project personnel can easily match high priority training needs with training sources as they proceed to organize new inservice workshops.

The project has developed and utilized a variety of delivery plans. Several guiding principles have been observed, some of which are noted as follows:

(a) Workshops are timed to be consistent with school calendars which means avoidance of vacation periods, holidays, weekends, and school term beginnings and endings. One- and two-day events offered during regular working hours are most feasible during the school year, while week-long events are best scheduled in the summer. Mid-week events are usually better than those scheduled for Monday and Friday.

(b) Workshops are located at the site of the trainer if possible. Others are spread around the state at schools, motels and conference centers. The resulting travel distances for participants are unequal, with persons from the outlying areas of the state being frequently disadvantaged. This potential inequity is solved by the project reimbursing round-trip travel mileage, less fifty miles. Thus those residing more than 25 miles from the event site are reimbursed.

(c) "Hands-on" opportunities are built into workshops to the extent possible.

(d) The project offers two types of events to instructors known as "tailormade" and "hitchhike." The tailormade workshops are those designed to meet specific needs as identified in the needs assessment process following the process model outlined above. These events are planned and delivered by project personnel with assistance from selected training sources. The hitchhike events are primarily "in house" training events offered by business and industry for their own personnel, but which are open to a limited number of vocational instructors as well. The project locates and announces these events to instructors in cooperation with the companies. These are featured during the summer since most involve a week or more time commitment.

Each workshop is evaluated by the participants. Almost without exception the events are highly rated. Participants are asked to describe topics for future technical update workshops, thus furnishing additional input to project needs assessment data.

Some significant additional benefits have resulted for those attending the technical updating events. The informal discussions during breaks, meals, and evenings have provided the participants, who have gathered from all over the state, with valuable exchanges on various pertinent professional and technical matters. Instructors frequently acquire new insights on matters quite unrelated to the specific workshop theme at hand.

Often comradery develops among groups of instructors which may continue during the following months and may be renewed at the next project-sponsored workshop the following year. In some instances these meetings have provided stimulation for the formation of new formal professional organizations as well as for the revitalization of existing organizations. In addition, some participants have been motivated to

seek additional technical updating experiences on their own initiative, thus continuing their professional development.

Teaching Competencies Component

After the technical updating component was firmly established, a lingering concern for meeting the general professional and teaching competency needs of instructors was addressed, again in collaboration with the MAASA inservice staff development committee.

Utilizing the experience gained in successfully installing the technical updating component and the process model outlined earlier in this paper, a state-wide needs assessment of area vocational center instructors was conducted covering specific teaching competencies as well as contemporary professional concerns. This resulted in identification of the topic "Teaching Work Habits and Attitudes" as their most critical concern.

In response to this need, a highly successful one-day workshop entitled "Teaching Work Habits and Attitudes" was piloted in 1981. As a result of the pilot workshops, it was determined that the most effective delivery format was a one-day inservice event involving the entire vocational staff in a school or school district. This workshop was offered across the state at approximately thirty sites.

Other highly rated concerns included providing for variations in learning style, updating in teacher liability, and articulation of secondary and community college programs. These and other needs in this component are currently being addressed.

Industrial Arts Component

The industrial arts teacher component of the VEPD Project mirrors the vocational instructor technical updating component. To date the focus has likewise been on inservice technical updating workshops. High priority topics were identified through needs assessments surveys and discussions with groups of teachers. Some of the topics addressed have been metrics, alternative energy sources with emphasis on solar energy and energy efficient construction, computer graphics, and new developments in welding technology. Training sources have been selected from industry, community colleges, universities, and associations. In collaboration with the Michigan Industrial Education Society, each of these one-day inservice events is offered at numerous selected sites throughout Michigan's upper and lower peninsulas, thus increasing accessibility and decreasing travel costs. Other costs involved in presenting these workshops are covered by the project so that it is not necessary to charge participants a workhsop fee. Applications for attendance at many events often exceeds capacity, thus leading to scheduling of additional or repeat events.

Participant evaluations of the industrial arts inservice events continue at a high level as does support from MIES. Although workshops have focused on technical updating topics to date, needs in professional teaching competencies will be addressed in the future.

Administrator Component

Several tailor-made seminars for secondary and post-secondary vocational administrators have been organized based on topics identified through utilization of various needs assessments techniques. Themes included have been "Building Linkages Between Vocational Education and Local Business, Industry and Labor," "Developing Public Information

Skills," and "Computer Applications for Vocational Administrators." A handbook entitled, "Public Information Program" was developed for administrators in connection with the public information skills seminar. The project ususally pilots these seminars prior to offering them on a regional basis. During 1983, two new series were successfully introduced which focused on high/emerging technology and computer aided instruction.

Vocational Guidance and Placement Personnel Component

Inservice events for vocational guidance personnel were added to the project last year. To address significant needs of this group, discussions were held with a reference group composed of vocational guidance and placement personnel from the local and state levels. It was determined that an "Educators in Industry" event would provide an educative experience capable of meeting many professional development needs of vocational guidance personnel. An on site, one week long, early summer seminar was organized in cooperation with Dow Chemical company of Midland, Michigan, in 1982. In 1983 a similar one week long "Educators-In-Industry" workshop was carried out in cooperation with three companies, namely General Electric, Herman Miller and Prince. Guidance and placement personnel acquired new concepts about the research and development, manufacturing, and distribution functions of a large corporation as well as its personnel requirements. Due to the success of this venture, it is most likely that similar experiences will be provided in the future for more vocational guidance personnel.

Individual Professional Development Plan Component

A new component to be implemented this year focuses on individual professional development planning. The objective is to provide inservice workshops which will assist individual vocational educators in the formulation of their own plans for continuing professional growth. After development and field testing last year, the workshop is available on request throughout the state.

Summary

In retrospect, significant progress has been made by VEPD Project in five short years to develop a unique mechanism for meeting the inservice personnel development needs of vocational educators in Michigan. Various techniques have been perfected for determining and prioritizing personnel development needs. An extensive directory of training resources has been developed and utilized. Experience has been gained with a variety of delivery systems. Hundreds of inservice events have been implemented and thousands of vocational educators have participated. Each event has been evaluated by its participants and follow-up activities have been implemented. Various advisory and reference groups provide input useful in keeping project components on target. Unusual professional development experiences are provided for he graduate assistants, certainly an important function of a university graduate-level vocational-technical education unit. A major land-grant university continues to fulfill its mission of addressing key needs found in its service area.

Yet, the VEPD Project has hardly more than scratched the surface in meeting the vast number of vocational education personnel development

needs known to exist. Perhaps the project makes up somewhat for a quantitative shortfall by the high quality of its inservice events and its stimulation of participating clientele to take responsibility for initiating their own professional development plans and activities.

The VEPD Project is funded through a grant from the Vocational-Technical Education Service, Michigan Department of Education which assigns one of its consultants to monitor the project. The project is operated by Michigan State University faculty and staff, including a part-time director, a full-time coordinator, a full-time associate coordinator, a full-time secretary, and six graduate assistants.

For further information about the VEPD Project, contact the VEPD Project Director or Project Coordinator at 401 Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824 or (517) 353-5244.